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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000382

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO A/S TOM SHANNON
USOAS PASS TO AMBASSADOR HECTOR MORALES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KSUM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER RODAS - AMBASSADOR DISCUSS OASGA
IN SAN PEDRO SULA

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Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador discussed the upcoming Organization of American States General Assembly (OASGA) over breakfast with Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas on May 23. The Ambassador conveyed the Secretary's keen interest in visiting Honduras and participating in a successful and constructive OASGA. The Ambassador outlined the key elements of the Obama Administration's positive approach to the region evidenced by the President's successful participation at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad. The Ambassador briefed Rodas on the U.S. initiative to reach out to Cuba and strengthen two-way communication, official and people-to-people. While the U.S. did not oppose dealing with Cuba at the OASGA, the Ambassador conveyed strong U.S. opposition to abrogate at this time the OAS resolution of 1962 that had suspended Cuba, or do anything that would undermine the OAS Democratic Charter. The Ambassador also conveyed concerns about the planned invitation of ALBA heads of state to San Pedro Sula. Rodas noted the historic nature of the Secretary's visit to San Pedro and the Honduran government's commitment to her successful visit and a constructive OASGA. She insisted that Honduras did not want to &Cubanize8 the OASGA, or do anything that would interfere with the ongoing U.S.-Cuba diplomatic engagement. She insisted, however, that there was strong support emanating from last December's Rio Group meeting in Brazil to deal with the issue of the OAS's suspension of Cuba in 1962, which she described as a Cold War relic. She said dealing with this issue in no way opened the door to the island's return to the OAS, an issue that in any event was of no interest to the Cuban government. Rodas confirmed the presence of Presidents Correa, Lugo and Ortega in San Pedro Sula, but said the visits of the two South American leaders were the results of longstanding invitations and not related to any attempt to convene the ALBA leadership to the OASGA.

She stressed that the only head of state permitted to speak at the plenary sessions would be President Zelaya who would give the inaugural address. Rodas said she planned to be in Caracas on May 25 to attempt to calm things⁸ and convey the GOH's interest in a successful and constructive OASGA. End Summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador told Rodas that Secretary Clinton was looking forward to visiting Honduras, meeting with President Zelaya, and attending the OASGA to be held June 1-2 in San Pedro Sula. The Ambassador reviewed the Secretary's notional schedule and confirmed that current plans were for the Secretary to arrive at some point (possibly early evening) on June 1 and depart the afternoon of June 2. Rodas responded that President Zelaya was very keen on holding a bilateral meeting with the Secretary. The Ambassador said that this request had been passed on to the staff and that we were looking at the possibility of holding the meeting on June 1, preferably soon after her arrival, and before the OASGA Plenary on June 2.

13. (C) The Ambassador said that President Obama and Secretary Clinton were committed to strengthening U.S. relations with all of the nations of the hemisphere. He noted that President Obama wanted a mature relationship with Latin America based on mutual respect and understanding. In Trinidad, President Obama had carefully listened to the views and concerns of fellow leaders. The President had also laid out some of his own priorities such as his focus on resolving the U.S.'s own economic difficulties, and working with our regional partners to mitigate the impact of the global economic crisis in the region, particularly its effect on small countries with high levels of poverty such as Honduras. The President and Secretary Clinton were also very

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interested in developing partnerships to promote clean and renewable sources of energy as a way to deal with climate change, strengthen our economic well being and our energy security. Obviously, the growing presence of international crime and narcotics trafficking represented a threat to governance and our people. The Obama Administration was committed to working with partners such as Mexico and Central America to develop a regional and holistic approach to deal with this threat, and that the Merida Initiative represented a valuable tool in this regard.

14. (C) The Ambassador said the OASGA was another opportunity for the Secretary to deal with senior level counterparts on developing a constructive hemispheric agenda. The Ambassador referred to his conversation with President Zelaya the previous day (May 22), and our concern about the potential that the OASGA would be Cubanized.⁸ The Ambassador explained that as had been the case in Trinidad, the U.S. did not object to a serious discussion of Cuba. He cited the Obama Administration's decision to lift restrictions on travel by Cuban-Americans and remittances as concrete measures to change the tone and substance of the relationship. He said the Administration was initiating a serious dialogue with the Cuban authorities that would deal with a number of issues of common interest that would include immigration. The Ambassador expressed the hope that the treatment of Cuba at the OASGA be done in a constructive and consensual manner. The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. was not prepared to support action by the OASGA to abrogate the 1962 resolution that had suspended Cuba, although we were not opposed to initiating a dialogue about the eventual reintegration of Cuba back in the OAS that was fully consistent with the principles enshrined in the Democratic Charter. We hoped any decisions taken on Cuba in San Pedro Sula be done in a collegial and consensual manner.

15. (C) The Ambassador also said that there were concerns in Washington about special invitations⁸ made by the Honduran government to ALBA Heads of State. The Ambassador said that as hosts the Honduran government had the serious

responsibility of ensuring that the OASGA be a constructive and serious event. The Ambassador stressed that all efforts should be made to avoid needless confrontation, divisive debates and shrill rhetoric. He conveyed our desire that the OASGA not be disrupted by ALBA members.

16. (C) Rodas confirmed that President Zelaya had briefed her on his conversation with the Ambassador. President Zelaya was committed to a constructive OASGA. She reiterated that the Honduran government also wanted the Secretary to have a successful and positive visit to San Pedro Sula. Nevertheless, the OAS had become increasingly irrelevant, and she expected that many Foreign Ministers would be critical of the organization. She argued that OAS was in serious need of reform and that it needed to be more reflective of the changes occurring in the region. Rodas said that it was in this spirit that Honduras and many Latin American countries were raising the issue of Cuba. She argued that many nations in the region did not want to &Cubanize8 the OASGA, but did want to remove an obsolete Cold War resolution resulting in the suspension of Cuba. The Honduras proposal was to include a simple, &clinical8 short paragraph in the text of the declaration that would abrogate the 1962 resolution on Cuba. Beyond that, the GOH wanted to focus the OASGA on the substantive issues of economic cooperation, energy and security, as well as a serious discussion of the theme of non-violence. She insisted that the decision to raise the issue had not come at the request of the Cuban government and that during last December's Rio Group meeting in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil President Raul Castro had told them that Cuba

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had no interest in returning to the OAS.

17. (C) Rodas denied any interest by Honduras in convening the ALBA heads of state to San Pedro Sula. She pointed out that the confirmed head of state visits were the result of past invitations that President Zelaya had made to Presidents Correa, Lugo and Kirchner. She said that Correa's planned attendance at the inauguration of Mauricio Funes in El Salvador had made it logistically convenient to stop in Honduras. She noted that the Correa visit was an official bilateral visit that would happen prior to the OASGA. Similarly, Lugo also planned to briefly come to Honduras following his attendance at the inauguration in San Salvador, but that Cristina Kirchner would be coming on an official visit in a September-October time frame. Finally, Daniel Ortega had told President Zelaya last week in Managua of his interest in attending the OASGA. Rodas said that the Honduran government would welcome other heads of state to attend the OASGA. She said that she had discussed with Brazilian Foreign Minister Amorim the possible attendance of President Lula, but did not have confirmation. She also suggested the presence of Presidents Uribe and Calderon. Rodas said that President Zelaya's instructions were that heads of state could sit-in on the plenary sessions, but would be prohibited from speaking. She said the only head of state authorized to speak at the plenary would be President Zelaya who would give the traditional inaugural speech along with OAS Secretary General Insulza. Rodas said that she planned to be in Caracas to meet with ALBA counterparts. She claimed her instructions from President Zelaya were to calm the waters and stress Honduras's interest in a successful OASGA. The Ambassador and Rodas agreed to stay in touch in the coming days.

18. (C) Comment: As the most hard line and ideological of Zelaya's ministers, Rodas appeared strongly committed to pushing for the Cuba resolution. Nevertheless, she appeared to be conscious of U.S. concerns and made clear that President Zelaya's instructions to her was for Honduras to host a serious and constructive OASGA that did not pit the U.S. against all others. We will continue to stay in touch with President Zelaya and Rodas and advance our issues and convey our concerns as necessary.

LLORENS